Canada

Québec

THE US PLEASURE TRAVEL MARKET

AMERICAN TRAVEL INTENTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUEBEC TOURISM PRODUCT

In order to clearly determine the characteristics of the U.S. pleasure travel market which are of particular interest to Quebec, the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion – Quebec Region, and the ministère du Tourisme du Québec, have joined together to study the results of an extensive survey commissioned by Tourism Canada in 1985.

This brochure is a summary of the above-mentioned study. It examines Americans' travel intentions during the period from October 1985 to September 1987 and their perceptions of Quebec's tourist products. It discusses the four types of pleasure travel that constitute the largest source of potential visitors to Quebec up to September 1987.

Conducted under the Canada-Quebec Subsidiary Agreement on Tourism Development, it is a useful tool for all those involved in the Quebec tourism industry who are interested in the U.S. pleasure travel market.

To obtain a copy of the entire study, contact either the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion or the ministère du Tourisme du Québec.

SUMMARY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A planning tool ____ 3

A high-potential market ____ 5

Highlights of the main types of pleasure travel:

- city trips ____ 7
- touring trips ____ 9
- resort trips ____ 11
- outdoor trips ____ 13

Conclusions ____ 15

A PLANNING TOOL

This document provides revealing information which can help those involved in the Quebec tourism industry to plan and develop their products and market them in the United States. It can be used to support an integrated marketing strategy for the industry as a whole, as well as individual strategies adapted to particular groups and the main types of pleasure travel: city trips, touring trips, resort trips and outdoor trips.

This document contributes to an increased awareness of the size of the American market, the travel habits of American tourists, the characteristics of the trips they take, as well as their travel objectives and desired activities. It also compares Quebec's position with that of competing destinations in Canada, the States and Europe, and gives an understanding of American perceptions of Quebec and the various aspects of the province's products.

Although this study was an inquiry into Americans' travel intentions for the period from October 1985 to September 1987, the data can be expected to remain sufficiently stable over time to establish some basic conclusions for the medium term.

This study should be considered as only a starting point in the process of researching and compiling information to help the industry make astute choices to gain a larger share of the American pleasure travel market.

A HIGH-POTENTIAL MARKET

For Canada

For several years now, pleasure travel has been the largest source of tourist income in Canada. Americans represent by far the largest foreign clientele in this market.

For the types of travel examined in the study, 42 million Americans foresee Canada as a definite or probable destination during the period from October 1985 to September 1987. In Canada, touring trips are the most popular (12.7 million), followed by city trips (10.3 million), outdoor trips (9.8 million), and resort trips (9 million).

For Quebec

The potential of the American market is also extremely attractive for Quebec. 10 million Americans said that they would definitely or probably visit Quebec during one of the four main types of pleasure trips.

In contrast to the whole of Canada, Quebec seems to attract the most American visitors to its cities (3.8 million). The next favoured type of pleasure travel is touring trips (2.7 million). Resort trips (1.9 million) and outdoor trips (1.7 million) represent less potential for Quebec for the period studied.

Quebec is a highly desirable travel destination among Americans. The prospects are excellent, and the tourism industry can maximize this potential by taking the right steps.

Geographic markets

In general, three out of four tourists intending to visit Quebec come from the Eastern United States, which can be divided into two priority markets for Quebec:

- the primary market, composed of the following divisions: New England and the Central Atlantic region
- the secondary market, composed of the following divisions: the Central North-East region and the South Atlantic region

Compared to the United States as a whole, Americans in the primary market have a great tendency to take touring trips and go on resort trips. Americans from the Central North-East region prefer outdoor trips, city trips and resort trips.

The South Atlantic region constitutes a favourable market for all four types of pleasure travel examined.

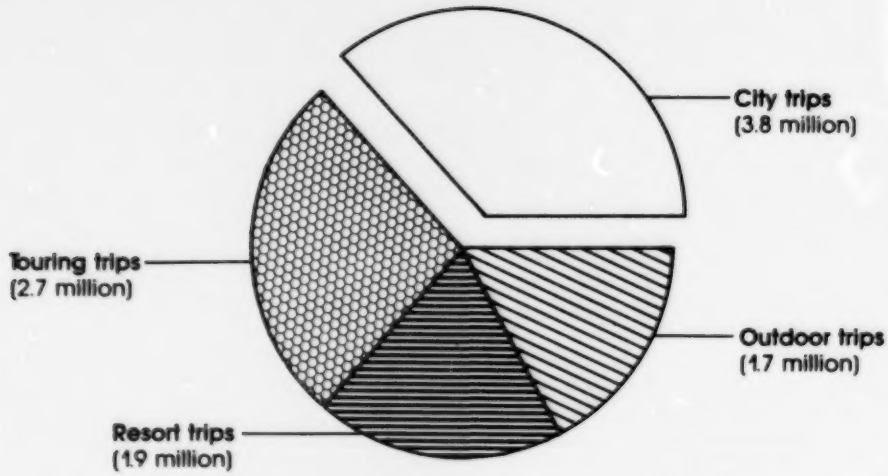
Ontario as a competitor

Ontario is Quebec's main Canadian competitor.

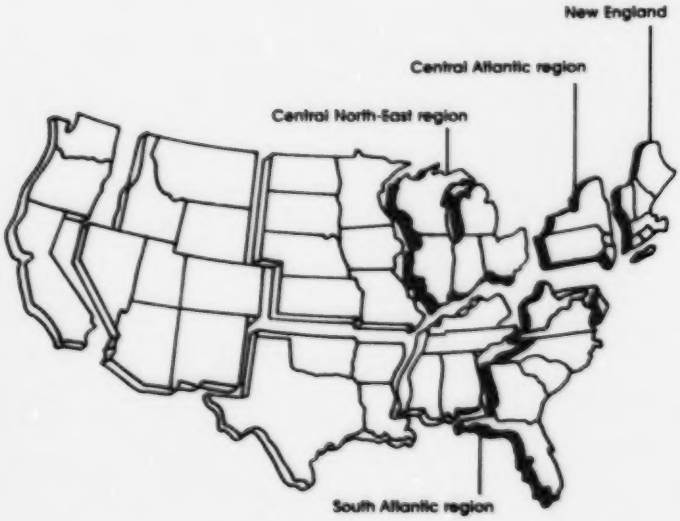
With respect to the origin of potential visitors, Quebec has a good hold on the New England market, whereas Ontario dominates the Central North-East market. The Central Atlantic and South Atlantic regions represent potential markets shared almost equally between the two provinces.

With respect to the travel intentions expressed, Quebec is more popular for touring and city trips. Ontario, on the other hand, is favoured for outdoor and resort trips.

Predicted travel to Quebec between Oct. 1985 and Sept. 1987 (definite or probable)



Quebec's primary and secondary markets



PRIMARY MARKET	
New England	Central Atlantic region
Vermont New Hampshire Maine Massachusetts Connecticut Rhode Island	New York New Jersey Pennsylvania

SECONDARY MARKET	
Central North-East region	South Atlantic region
Wisconsin Illinois Michigan Indiana Ohio	Maryland District of Columbia Delaware Virginia West Virginia North Carolina South Carolina Georgia Florida

1
CITY TRIPS

Definition: "...to a city where you may shop, visit museums, enjoy entertainment, dine, attend plays or concerts, or just stroll around and enjoy the city."

Objectives: An active vacation with a lot of social and cultural activities.

Average stay: 3.9 nights

Planning time: less than a month

Packages:
- 11% of all trips
- 22% of trips outside the U.S.

Through travel agencies:
- 10% of all trips
- 51% of trips outside the U.S.

Main modes of transportation:
- 70% by car
- 22% by plane

Main types of accommodations:
39% at hotels

The market and the clientele

For Quebec, city trips represent the largest market of potential American tourists, as 3.8 million Americans definitely or probably intend to visit Montreal or Quebec City.

Because of Montreal and Quebec City, Quebec is the most popular province for American visitors wishing to take this kind of trip. It is more popular than Ontario or British Columbia.

The group of American visitors interested in visiting cities in Quebec is composed of singles, young people, women, and graduates of higher learning institutions.

The majority of potential visitors to Quebec (74%) come from the four American regions which form Quebec's primary and secondary markets.

In contrast to tourists wishing to take other types of trips, these potential visitors are distributed more equally among the four American regions, representing a broader geographic market for Quebec.

Quebec's strengths and weaknesses

Quebec's cities are renowned for their hotels and restaurants and for their wide range of activities, making them a preferred destination for city trips. Americans feel they will find what they generally want in a city trip:
- a well-known, popular city
- first-class hotels
- a place where they will not get bored
- monuments and other points of interest
- chic restaurants

Moreover, Montreal, renowned for its attractive shops, and Quebec City, known for its history, are very popular for many other reasons as well, such as their "différence", beauty, and fine cuisine. Americans also feel that these cities would interest their friends, are fun to visit, provide the opportunity to wander around at a leisurely pace, see beautiful parks and gardens, and meet all kinds of interesting people.

However, Quebec's cities are less well perceived with regard to prices.

8 Positioning and competition

In Canada

For city trips, Quebec's main Canadian competitor is Ontario (Toronto), particularly on the markets of the Central Atlantic region, the Central North-East region, and New England.

In comparison to Toronto, cities in Quebec have an advantage for visitors from New England. Nevertheless, the competition is fierce on the Central North-East market, since 40% of potential visitors to Toronto come from this region.

If one compares Montreal and Quebec City to other Canadian cities, the only difference is that Montreal is perceived as having greater renown.

Americans consider Montreal and Toronto as cities that are both different and multicultural. On the other hand, Toronto is perceived as a city with a relatively pleasant climate.

The only points differentiating the most popular Canadian destinations are:

- Montreal is perceived as being a better place for "having a good time" than Quebec City
- Quebec City is better known for its history than Toronto
- Toronto is better known for its night life than Quebec City

In the United States

The most popular American cities among tourists are, in order of importance, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. However, when planning their trips, Americans seem to feel these cities are expensive and hard to get to, so they often choose a city that is more within their reach.

Quebec's advantages over the American cities are different for city trips than for other types of travel. The major distinction is not "la différence", but the fact that Quebec's cities are perceived as being clean, affordable, and ideal for wandering around at a leisurely pace.

In Europe

Overseas cities such as Paris, London, Rome and Frankfort are perceived more favourably than Montreal and Quebec City. But these cities do not constitute Quebec's main competition in terms of travel destinations. The perceived differences are often based on actual differences in the product, which is a difficult thing to change.

In short...

Quebec is the most popular province in Canada for city trips, which seems to indicate that in the medium term, this type of travel will generate the greatest number of tourists in Quebec.

Montreal and Quebec City may be perceived as having nothing truly distinctive to offer, compared with other large cities throughout the world, but this is no doubt because Americans know very little about these two Quebec metropolises.

On the other hand, when compared with other Canadian destinations, Montreal and Quebec City stand out because of their cultural "différence" and the fact that they are clean and safe.

Finally, it is worth noting that city trips often lead people to explore other tourist regions as well. They are therefore important to the overall Quebec tourist industry.

2
TOURING TRIPS

Definition: "...by car, bus or train through areas of scenic beauty, cultural or general interest."

Objectives: To discover different cultures and ways of life. To visit cities and towns.

Average stay: 8.4 nights

Planning time: 1-2 months

Packages:
- 23% of all trips
- 31% of trips outside the U.S.

Through travel agencies:
- 15% of all trips
- 52% of trips outside the U.S.

Main modes of transportation:
- 60% by car

Main types of accommodations:
- 49% at motels

The market and the clientele

For this type of travel, Quebec is very attractive to American tourists. It represents not only the second largest source of potential tourists in Quebec (2.7 million), but also accounts for 21% of definite or probable intentions to take a tour within Canada. Thus, after the Pacific region, Quebec is the most popular Canadian destination of Americans interested in this type of travel.

The clientele interested in taking a tour in Quebec is made up mostly of retired people, low-income earners, and residents of large urban centres.

Nevertheless, as is generally the case for people who like this type of travel, there is also a high proportion of married couples and educated individuals among potential visitors.

Nearly one-half come from the Central Atlantic region (especially New York State), while only 10% are from New England.

Quebec's strengths and weaknesses

Most Americans perceive Quebec as having everything necessary to make it a highly desirable tourist destination. For example:
- it has beautiful scenery
- there are a lot of things to do and see, so one will not be bored
- it is a renowned, popular place
- there are well-known monuments and other points of interest

What makes Quebec a choice destination is mostly its different culture and way of life. Quebec is also considered to be a region with first-rate restaurants and hotels, and a place where people can travel safely.

However, Americans have less positive impressions of the prices in Quebec (costly destination) and the beaches.

Positioning and competition

In Canada

In general, it seems that Quebec's advantage over other Canadian destinations is that it corresponds more closely to the objectives and activities sought by American tour-goers.

The main competitor from which Quebec must distinguish itself is Ontario, with respect to the U.S. market in general, and all four of the main geographical markets. Moreover, in the Central Atlantic region — source of over half the potential visitors to Quebec — competition is very intense, as 30% of potential visitors to Ontario also come from this region.

Americans' perceptions of the two provinces give a statistically significant advantage to Quebec for its first-class hotels and restaurants. Ontario's distinct advantage is that it is perceived as being geographically closer.

In the United States

Although Quebec has a certain degree of renown among Americans in the Central Atlantic and New England regions, it ranks far behind the most popular foreign and American destinations such as California, Florida, Colorado and Hawaii.

Once again, Quebec's advantage over the main competing destinations in the States resides in its "différence". Its weak points have to do with its degree of renown, the distance, the beaches, the climate, and the monuments and other points of interest.

In Europe

Quebec tours are very different from those offered in Europe. Consequently, Quebec is not really in competition with Europe in this market.

But in view of Americans' preference for foreign or overseas destinations when taking a tour, their perceptions of these tourist regions should be examined. In fact, Europe accounts for 53% of all travel outside the U.S.

The main advantages for European tourist destinations relate to the things to see and do, the historical sites, the points of interest and the monuments.

It is also interesting to note that people associate Quebec with Europe because of its different culture and way of life. As a result, people view these destinations as unique.

In short...

Due to its distinctive characteristics, Quebec is capable of cornering a large share of the American tour market over the next few years. Moreover, since the average stay is longest for this type of travel, tours represent a major source of potential income for everyone involved in this market.

Quebec's unique atmosphere is expressed via a culture and a way of life that Americans perceive as different, and this corresponds to one of the main travel objectives expressed by Americans who have taken tours in the past.

Finally, what makes the tour market extremely attractive to Quebec is the fact that tourists go from place to place, and a great deal of their time is spent visiting cities and towns.

3
RESORT TRIPS

Definition: "...to a resort or resort area where a wide variety of activities such as beaches, skiing, golfing, tennis and so on, are available nearby or on the premises."

Objectives: To vacation in the sun near the ocean, rest, relax and enjoy the opportunity of participating in various physical activities.

Average stay: 6.1 nights

Planning time: 1-2 months

Packages:
- 20% of all trips
- 43% of trips outside the U.S.

Through travel agencies:
- 23% of all trips
- 52% of trips outside the U.S.

Main modes of transportation:
- 71% by car
- 29% by plane

Main types of accommodations:
- 31% in hotels
- 26% in motels
- quality is important

The market and the clientele

Resort trips represent Quebec's third potential market. It should be noted, however, that Americans' perception of resort travel is that the purpose is vacationing in the sun. For this reason, they usually prefer seaside destinations.

Because of its climate, Quebec is not often spontaneously chosen by Americans for this type of travel.

Quebec places third among Canadian destinations and as such, is favoured by 21% of Americans in this market, or 1.9 million potential tourists. Americans are more interested in Ontario and the Rockies, which account for 56% of the travel intentions expressed.

In general, the group preferring this type of travel is slightly younger in age, and is composed mainly of high-income earners and graduates of an institute of higher learning.

Those who foresee a trip to Quebec include a high percentage of retired people and a low percentage of students, with low annual income.

Over one-half of Americans wishing to spend a resort vacation in Quebec come from the Central Atlantic region (37%) and the Central North-East region (23%). 27% of the clientele comes from New England and the South Atlantic region.

Quebec's strengths and weaknesses

In general, the resorts preferred by Americans have the following characteristics:
- they are popular and well-known
- they have beautiful scenery and are attractive
- there are a lot of things to see and do
- people can wander around at a leisurely pace

Although it is perceived as having all these characteristics, Quebec is particularly distinctive in that it offers a different culture and way of life, is pleasant to visit, would be of interest to friends, and has chic restaurants offering fine cuisine.

In light of what Americans look for in a resort, Quebec is less well perceived in terms of prices (costly destination), its beaches and water sports.

Positioning and competition

In Canada

On certain aspects, Quebec is better perceived than all other Canadian destinations. Its main advantages are its different culture and way of life, its elegant restaurants offering excellent cuisine and its exciting night life.

Resorts in Ontario and the Rockies, however, are very popular with Americans, which is no doubt due to the fact that Americans are more familiar with them than they are with Quebec resorts. They are also closer destinations for a very large number of travellers.

On the other hand, the clientele wishing to take a resort vacation in Ontario or Quebec comes from all regions of Quebec's primary and secondary markets, with no notable advantage in favour of either of these two provinces.

In the United States

After foreign destinations, places such as Florida, Hawaii, California, Nevada, North and South Carolina are in second place in terms of Americans' travel intentions. Most of these destinations are located by the sea.

Those Americans in Quebec's primary and secondary markets who do not choose one of these destinations tend to choose resorts that are not far from their home. In fact, these states are located quite close to the sea, and feature many destinations which are very well-known.

Quebec's weak point, therefore, is that it is not perceived as ideal for a vacation in the sun.

Destinations abroad

Quebec's main competitors on this market are foreign and overseas destinations. Nearly one out of two Americans intends to visit a destination outside the North American continent, especially southerly points such as Mexico, the Bahamas or the Caribbean.

In short...

For Quebec, as for the rest of Canada, the resort travel market is much smaller than the market for tours and city travel.

This is mainly due to the fact that Americans associate this type of travel with a sunny spot near the ocean.

However, Quebec is renowned for its excellent hotels and restaurants.

4
OUTDOOR TRIPS

Definition: "... in a natural area where you may engage in activities such as camping, hunting, fishing, hiking or rafting."

Objectives: To get away from it all, enjoy nature, and do physical activities.

Average stay: 4.3 nights

Planning time: less than a month

Packages:
- 5% of all trips
- 9% of trips outside the U.S.

Through travel agencies:
- 2% of all trips
- 6% of trips outside the U.S.

Main modes of transportation:
- 96% by automobile, truck or leisure vehicle

Main types of accommodations:
- 65% by camping or trailer

The market and the clientele

It is on the outdoor trip market that Quebec's position is the weakest. Despite the large number of American travellers interested in this type of vacation, only 3% of these trips are taken outside the U.S.. Although Canada is the preferred destination for most of the trips in this category taken outside the U.S., Quebec will be host to only 16% (1.7 million).

On this already limited market, Quebec is only in fourth place with respect to Americans' travel intentions, after the Rockies, the Pacific region and Ontario.

The American clientele considering Quebec as a possible destination for an outdoor vacation is composed mainly of women, young people aged 21-30, part-time workers, and people with professional or technical training.

Nearly three-quarters of these potential tourists are from New England, the Central Atlantic region and the Central North-East region because of their proximity.

Quebec's strengths and weaknesses

In general, Quebec has some of the characteristics preferred by people who like outdoor vacations, such as:
- beautiful scenery
- many things to see and do
- areas which are wild but accessible
- a feeling of adventure

Americans considering Quebec for an upcoming vacation also feel it has some distinct advantages over other outdoor destinations. For them, Quebec is distinctive because of the cost of accommodations, its "différence" and historical interest.

Nevertheless, Quebec seems to be less well perceived for reasons of distance and with regard to hunting and fishing.

Positioning and competition

In Canada

In general, there are few aspects that distinguish Quebec from other Canadian destinations. The historical aspect is better perceived, but it is not that important in an outdoor vacation. There are two aspects in Quebec's favour: it seems to be better known and easier to get to. However, it is judged to be less attractive for mountain-climbing and hiking.

Although Ontario is Quebec's main competitor in Canada, there are few significant differences with respect to perceptions. Ontario is better known for its water sports, which are important for this type of vacation taken mainly in the summertime.

Although Quebec is the second or third choice of Americans from the Central Atlantic and Central North-East regions, it is far behind Ontario. 47% of potential visitors to Ontario are from the Central North-East region.

In the United States

Most destinations competing with Quebec are in the U.S.. Quebec does not come to mind spontaneously among people in the overall American market or those in the primary and secondary markets. In fact, the most popular outdoor vacation spots are nearby, and are often located within the borders of these states.

This can be explained by the fact that these vacations are generally short, and the American product complies with the demand. American tourists seek a pleasant climate and water sports, and American destinations are better perceived in these respects.

Quebec's main American competitors are New England, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The Quebec landscape is perceived as more natural and untouched, whereas New England is perceived as being more popular, closer, and having prettier scenery and numerous points of interest nearby.

What is distinctive about Quebec is that it is more interesting historically. But the above-mentioned states attract more visitors because of their close proximity and their hunting and fishing.

In Europe

For Americans in general, an outdoor vacation in Europe is a completely different thing. For them, it is a "real adventure", an opportunity to impress their friends, and a chance to test their skills – especially on the ski slopes.

Compared to European destinations, Quebec's advantages reside in its water sports, hunting and fishing, and the fact that it is easy to get to. It also offers affordable accommodations.

In short...

Given the elements which motivate Americans to take this type of vacation, Quebec can capture only a very small share of the American market which does not offer much potential in terms of vacations taken outside the U.S.

In the States as in Canada, outdoor vacations seem to attract local and national markets.

If, however, one considers the profile of the type of person who takes outdoor vacations, and the characteristics of this type of vacation (i.e. the favoured type of accommodations is camping or trailers), the potential tourist revenues are not that high.

CONCLUSIONS

Since 10 million Americans have expressed a definite or probable intention to visit Quebec by September 1987 for one of the four main types of pleasure trips, this market has a great deal of potential.

Given Quebec's geographical location, its attractive tourist products, and the travel characteristics of Americans, this province is capable of capturing a large share of the American pleasure travel market.

This study has provided information which will be useful in an ongoing effort to adapt Quebec's tourist development strategies to the American market.

Americans' limited knowledge of Quebec's tourist products confirms the importance of ongoing dissemination of information showing the many attractive aspects of Quebec that make it an excellent travel destination.

On the other hand, constant improvement of the quality of the product with respect to hotels, restaurants, activities and attractions should be a priority objective to further improve Quebec's position on this market.

Moreover, in Quebec, Americans' preference for touring and city trips should lead to concentration of marketing efforts on these two types of travel.

The main clientele

The clientele which has shown an interest in Quebec is not really different from the group of travellers who take each type of trip.

Only touring and resort trips seem to attract a higher proportion of people over age 50, who belong to lower income groups.

Although this trend should be taken into account, the communication and product strategies should not be designed exclusively with these segments of the population in mind. It should be remembered that two-thirds of American tourists are under 50 years of age, half are in professional and specialized occupations, and their education level is relatively high.

Distinctive characteristics

Two of Quebec's distinctive characteristics are its cultural atmosphere and its historical interest. The "unique flavour" found in Quebec should therefore be highlighted, since tourists look for a place that "feels different" from what they are accustomed to; this applies to touring as well as city trips.

Although this advantage seems to be the basis for Quebec's position on the American pleasure travel market, care should be taken that is does not discourage prospective tourists especially where language is concerned.

The communication approach should thus be reassuring with respect to the cultural differences found in Quebec.

The main product markets

In view of the intentions and preferences expressed by Americans, and the position of Ontario (Quebec's main Canadian competitor) and the other destinations competing for Quebec's primary and secondary markets, this study has also helped to identify specific product market segments that could be developed:

New England

- market dominated by Quebec
- maintain marketing efforts with respect to touring trips

Central Atlantic region

- market shared by Quebec and Ontario
- step up marketing efforts on touring trips

Central North-East region

- market dominated by Ontario
- step up marketing efforts on city trips

South Atlantic region

- market shared by Quebec and Ontario
- step up marketing efforts on touring and city trips